



June 6, 2022

Via email

The Honorable Nancy Skinner
Chair, Senate Budget Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 502
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Bob Wieckowski
Chair, Senate Budget Subcommittee-2
Legislative Office Building, Room 502
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Senate Climate Budget Proposal on Water and Drought – SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS

The undersigned organizations strongly support the Senate’s bold approach on Water and Drought, starting from the foundational recognition that water in California is over-allocated. We strongly support the Senate’s vision of reconciling water supply and demand as an alternative to funding proposed “Voluntary Agreements.” We support many of the specific elements of the proposal, with suggested amendments, as discussed below.

We support in concept the proposal for administration of a land retirement program by the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB), in consultation with SWRCB and DFW. This puts trustee agencies in charge, rather than those who profit from land purchases and water diversions. We also strongly support the proposal to create an advisory board with members that represent disadvantaged communities, tribes, and environmental organizations. We also support increased funding for the acquisition and repurposing of lands to support the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act.

However, we respectfully request the following amendments:

1. In recognition of historic injustices, the legislation should provide a path for tribes to oversee management of land purchased in their historic homelands, and /or to use the land for tribal purposes.
2. More funding needs to be allocated for mitigation of community impacts of land retirement. In the San Joaquin Valley, this could be combined with funding for jobs supporting rapid reduction in GHG emissions. In the Sierra Nevada, this could be combined with funding for mitigation of wildfire risk.

3. The program needs to provide enforcement mechanisms ensuring that all water rights associated with a diversion are purchased, perhaps through certification by the SWRCB.
4. The program needs to ensure that water purchased for the environment is dedicated in perpetuity to instream uses, through petitions for instream flow dedication under Water Code section 1707, or similar. We look forward to working with the legislature to develop mechanisms that prevent water restored to streams from being appropriated by other diverters.
5. Additional funding, including reductions of "local match" requirements and a streamlined application process, needs to be allocated and advanced through the DOC Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program (SALCP) to expedite the purchases of farm and ranch lands. The enforcement mechanism to ensure the achievement of actual, permanent water conservation goals can be embodied in the programmatic purchases of recorded conservation easements that can include permanent irrigation reductions that would be enforceable by the SWRCB.
6. The program needs to provide funding for ongoing monitoring and oversight of habitat restoration projects.

We also support in concept the proposal to strengthen water rights quantification and enforcement at the SWRCB, and to provide funding to DFW and the Delta Independent Science Board. We also support funding for monitoring and scientific oversight of habitat restoration and multi-benefit projects in the Delta, including peer review by the Delta Independent Science Board. However, we request the following amendments:

1. We request funding for more staff in the Water Rights Division of the SWRCB, rather than creation of a separate statewide environmental water master office. The SWRCB best knows how to prioritize staff resources.
2. The SWRCB needs dedicated funding for improvement of the Board's watershed modeling for the Bay-Delta Water Quality Control Plan, for drought curtailment, and for Harmful Algal Bloom study and modeling.
3. The Department of Fish and Wildlife needs dedicated funding for determination of instream flow needs to protect aquatic and stream-dependent wildlife, which has been delayed for four decades.
4. The Delta Independent Science Board needs dedicated funding to expand its capacity. It is essential to have oversight and independent peer review of the proposed investments in water management science.
5. The Delta Independent Science Board needs dedicated funding for peer review of investments in habitat restoration and multi-benefit projects in the Delta. The Interagency Ecological Program is the appropriate entity to do monitoring and scientific oversight of habitat restoration and multi-benefit projects in the Delta.

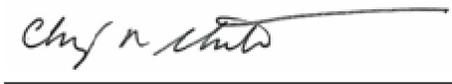
We also strongly support the proposal for \$1.5 billion for drought resilience, but request that the language requires that this funding does not result in new or increased diversions or infrastructure but focus instead on sustainable solutions such as water recycling, stormwater capture, and groundwater cleanup.

We support in concept investments for watershed resilience, but request that the language clearly specify nature-based solutions as a key tool to increase watershed resilience. We also request prioritization for recovery of watersheds and streams impacted by wildfire.

We support the proposal for \$1 billion for flood management and dam safety, but request that funds be clearly dedicated to improving existing infrastructure, or investing in nature-based solutions, not building new infrastructure.

Finally, we support the proposal for \$1.5 billion for safe and clean drinking water.

Thank you for your consideration of these requests.



Chris Shutes, Water Rights Advocate
California Sportfishing Protection Alliance
blancapaloma@msn.com



Deirdre Des Jardins, Director
California Water Research
ddj@cah2oresearch.com



Ron Stork, Senior Advocate
Friends of the River
rstork@friendsoftheriver.org

Michele Fowler, Chair
Northridge Indivisible
michelle@trnindivisible.org



Mike Conroy, Executive Director
Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's
Associations



Keiko Mertz, M.Sc., Policy Manager
South Yuba River Citizens League
keiko@yubariver.org

cc:

Joanne Roy, Consultant, Senate Budget Subcommittee #2 on Resources, Environmental Protection and Energy